

Edwin Walker, Controversial General, Dies at 83

By ERIC PACE

Maj. Gen. Edwin A. Walker, whose right-wing political activities led to an official rebuke and his resignation from the Army in 1961, died on Sunday at his home in Dallas. He was 83.

The cause was lung disease, the Dallas County medical examiner's office said in a report yesterday.

General Walker, a lanky, much-decorated Texan who led combat units in World War II and the Korean War, ended his 30-year Army career because, he said, he "could no longer serve in uniform and be a collaborator with the release of United States sovereignty to the United Nations."

On April 10, 1963, a sniper fired at him as he sat at his desk in his home. The bullet missed his head by about an inch.

In 1964, a commission headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren to investigate the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, identified the assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, as the same man who had fired at General Walker.

The Warren Commission, relying on testimony from Mr. Oswald's widow, Marina, said Mr. Oswald tried to kill the general because he was "an extremist," and it cited the incident as

A vociferous anti-Communist who was a target of Oswald.

evidence of Mr. Oswald's capacity for violence.

The issue that led to General Walker's resignation began in April 1961 when *Overseas Weekly*, a privately owned newspaper circulated among members of the armed forces overseas, accused the general of using an Army information program to subject his troops to "a propaganda barrage" that extolled the John Birch Society. General Walker was then commanding the 24th Infantry Division, based in West Germany.

The newspaper also reported that the general had publicly asserted that former President Harry S. Truman, Eleanor Roosevelt and former Secretary of State Dean Acheson were "definitely pink."

The report attracted widespread attention, and President Kennedy ordered an investigation into the matter.

The general was relieved of his command while the inquiry was conducted.

In June 1961, the Army said the investigation showed that the general's information program was "not attributable to any program of the John Birch Society." But it admonished the general "for taking injudicious actions and for making derogatory public statements about prominent Americans."

He resigned on Nov. 2, 1961, contending that he "must be free from the power of little men who, in the name of my country, punish loyal service to it."

By resigning rather than retiring, he passed up retirement pay that at the time would have amounted to \$12,000 a year. To accept retirement benefits, he said, "would be a compromise with my principles."

Two decades later, the Army quietly restored his pension rights, and in 1982 he began getting a major general's pension of \$45,120 a year. In granting the pension, the Army called him "a truly dedicated American soldier who firmly believed that insufficient action was being taken within the military establishment to combat the threat of Communism."

Critic of Kennedy

After leaving the Army in 1961, General Walker was outspoken in his criticism of the Kennedy Administration. He also became active in segregationist resistance efforts in the South and said civil rights demonstrations in Washington and in Austin, Tex., were "pro-Kennedy, pro-Communist and pro-Socialist."

He was a candidate for the Democratic nomination for governor of Texas in 1962, but finished last in a primary election contest with five other candidates.

In October 1962, after Federal marshals had put down riots at the University of Mississippi and forced the university to admit James H. Meredith, a black student, General Walker was arrested on a Federal warrant charging him with insurrection and seditious conspiracy. But a Federal grand jury failed to indict him and the charges were dropped.

In 1967, the Supreme Court threw out a \$500,000 libel judgment he had won against The Associated Press after the news agency reported that he had "led a charge of students against Federal marshals" deployed at the university to guard Mr. Meredith. The Court said public figures were the same as public officials and therefore the media deserved protection for mistakes made without malice.

On June 23, 1976, General Walker was arrested on a charge of public



Ernest Reshevsky/Pix Inc., 1962

Maj. Gen. Edwin A. Walker

lewdness in a restroom at a Dallas park. The arresting police officer said the general made sexual advances. The general later pleaded no contest and was fined \$1,000 and court costs. The case was widely reported in the news media.

Edwin Anderson Walker was born on Nov. 10, 1909, in Center Point, Tex. He graduated from the New Mexico Military Institute in 1927 and began his Army career as a lieutenant of artillery after graduating from the United States Military Academy in 1931.

In World War II, he led a special force of Americans and Canadians in the Aleutians, Italy and France. The unit, the Special Service Force, was trained for airborne, amphibious, mountain and ski operations; it fought at the Anzio beachhead in Italy and in the invasion of southern France.

He later commanded the 417th Infantry Regiment, attached to the Third Army, and at V-E Day he was commanding a special task unit in Oslo.

In the Korean War, he commanded the Third Infantry Division's Seventh Regiment and was senior adviser to the First Korean Corps. He later served as military adviser to Chiang Kai-shek of Nationalist China.

In 1957, as commander of the Arkansas military district, General Walker led the troops ordered to Little Rock by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to quell disturbances resulting from the integration of public schools there.

General Walker's decorations included the Silver Star, the Bronze Star with cluster and the Legion of Merit, as well as honors from France, Britain, Norway and South Korea.

Survivors include a nephew, George Walker.